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AUTHOR DeFrancis, John
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ABSTRACT

Because of the language changes that have taken place in the People's Republic of China since 1949, Chinese can be seen as a language divided between the pre-1949 varieties and the post-1949 ones. What is taught in the United States does not reflect the current Chinese situation, partly because most of the native language teachers in the United States left China in 1949. The chages that have taken place in the language of the People's Republic, which include phonological, lexical, and syntactical elements, as well as situational ones, must be taken into account in language instruction. A student of Chines should acquire linguistic and sociolinguistic competence and an awareness of both the pre-1949 and the post-1949 varieties of Chinese. Therefore, Chinese language teaching materials need to deal with the sociolinguistic variants. This can be done by providing existing texts with supplementary materials that make use of a contrastive approach to present the variant usages.
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# SOCIOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF CHINESE LANGUAGE-TEACHING MATERIALS*

John DeFrancis

University of Hawaii

During the past decade or so discussions concerning language-teaching methodology have on the whole focussed on the controversy between the audiolingual approach versus the cognitive code-learning approach. In the Chinese field, however, this controversy appears to be somewhat less acute than in other languages, in part because we have made greater use of an eclectic approach drawing on both of these methodologies. At least this is the case with respect to preparation of teaching materials, as against the actual teaching of these materials. Thus two sets of texts, the IFEL and my own, both of which go back to a common source of inspiration stemming from the work of Professor George A. Kennedy, on the one hand emphasize the need for an audiolingual approach in contrast to the previous reading emphasis based on characters, and on the other hand present a highly structured sequencing of learning problems, as indicated by the fact that lessons are centered around such problems as resultative verbs, comparison, and so on.

I think it is high time we passed beyond the sterile either-or controversy over audiolingual versus cognitive code-learning approaches to give more consideration to some sociolinguistic aspects of Chinese language teaching. What I have in mind is the sort of phenomena dealt with under such concepts as "linguistic repertoire" and "the

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ethnography of speaking"--what Martin Joos calls "the complex relationships between language and the specific social environments".

As native speakers of a language we generally have no great difficulty in coping with variations in speech related to the various social environments which we may encounter. Just what is said in a specific situation may depend on whether we are in a communicative setting with someone younger or older, of the same or opposite sex, of lower or higher social standing, belonging to our own circle or to an outside group, and so on and so on. Thanks to our knowledge of our native language and culture we can generally, without further contextual clues, identify possible situations in which variant forms of expressions such as the following might be used:

1. I ain't got none versus I don't have any
2. Hi! versus How do you do?
3. Hell, it's 10:00 already! versus Heavens, it's 10:00 already!
4. That's cool versus That's very nice
5. the ups and downs of the economy versus the fluctuations in the economy
6. Sign here versus Please put your signature here
7. bag versus sack versus poke
8. greasy versus greazy
9. Let's take the elevator versus Let's take the lift
10. America's generous financial contributions versus Yankee imperialism's silver bullets

Whereas as speakers of a language we cope all the time with the diverse repertoires represented by variant expressions such as these, as language teachers we tend to push these complexities aside in favor of a simpler normative approach. In our

justified concentration on telling students that they must say so-and-so and not such-and-such (for example, Wǒ-hěn-máng and not Wǒ-shi-máng), we seldom take the time to point out the variant usages that are possible in some situations and are indeed required in others. One reason for this failure, as I have just intimated, is the problem of time. To explain some of these things would often involve lengthy discussion, and would often have to be done in English. We understandably don't want to take too much time from the other tasks confronting us and certainly don't want to use too much English in our Chinese classes. But there are other reasons, less to our credit, that are related to what is perhaps the overriding situational variant in Chinese. This is the situation that Paul Kratochvil has labelled "Divided Languages."

Kratochvil's discussion of Chinese as a divided language stresses the language changes that have taken place in the People's Republic of China and calls for greater consideration of these changes in the teaching of Chinese. He questions whether the language behavior of an educated speaker of Chinese living outside the Chinese mainland is relevant to the way in which educated speakers can be expected to communicate with each other and with foreigners in the People's Republic. He castigates teachers and textbook writers, myself included, for what he calls our "evasive approach" to this problem.

It is indeed the case that most of our native Chinese language teachers left China before 1949, and that [redacted] most of our [redacted] teaching materials were compiled either during World War II or during the Cold War period that followed it. Some texts ignore completely the existence of the People's Republic. Others bring in material relevant to the PRC but fail to do so consistently or in a manner obvious to the student.

For example, the perceptive reader will note that there are many items in my Beginning Chinese Reader that relate to the PRC, and that the lesson in my Advanced Chinese dealing with "Minorities" discusses this subject from the viewpoint of the People's Republic rather than of Taiwan, as indicated by its introduction of concepts such as "national minorities", "autonomous regions", etc. However, writing in a period between the repressiveness of McCarthyism in the 50's and the relaxation that followed the legitimizing of the PRC by Nixon in the early 70's, I considered it expedient to handle topics related to the People's Republic with some circumspection.

Now that we have been made somewhat bolder by the freer atmosphere that we are currently, and I hope not temporarily, enjoying, it is appropriate to ask whether we should not deal more directly with the sociolinguistic aspects stemming from Chinese as a divided language. How should we do this?

I do not think, as some do, that we should go from one extreme of ignoring the kind of Chinese found in the People's Republic to concentrating exclusively on that particular form of the language. Our task, after all, is to help prepare our students for various fields of endeavor. Perhaps the largest number of students are oriented toward the study of history, literature, and other academic subjects. It is absolutely essential for the vast majority of our students that they know both the pre-1949 and post-1949 kinds of Chinese.

There are various ways in which we could approach our task. Let me now present the specific approach that I am using in respect to my own teaching materials.

The first problem is to note the changes that have taken place in Chinese in the past few decades. This is admittedly not an easy thing to do. A considerable amount of post-1949 literature from both the Mainland and Taiwan is available to us,

so that it is possible to note some of the changes that have taken place in written Chinese during this period. But isolated as most foreigners, especially most Americans, have been from close contact with the language as spoken in the PRC, there is a special problem in finding out what should be said in specific situations there.

In attacking this problem I took note of what was presented in PRC publications, especially their own teaching materials, and what was reported by various people who have visited the People's Republic. These reports, however, are extremely sketchy, in part because most American visitors to China have been able to observe the language only during short stays of three or four weeks. Of considerably greater value was the generous assistance given to me by friends at the Université de Provence in Aix-en-Provence, France, whose contacts with Chinese as spoken in the PRC have been particularly extensive.

Mr. Patrick Destenay, who heads the Chinese program at Aix, spent three years in China as a student during and after the Cultural Revolution, has returned as interpreter for French missions to China, and spent a whole month last summer as interpreter for a Chinese mission to France. Mr. Constantin Milsky is a near-native speaker of the language who left China during the Cultural Revolution. Both have had almost continuous contacts with speakers from the PRC, including exchange teachers of Chinese sent to the University, students sent to study French in Aix-en-Provence, and technical specialists at nearby industrial plants.

When I was invited to give a lecture at the Université de Provence during my sabbatical in France, in the Spring of 1974, I discovered that they were using some of my texts in their program. At my request, during the year 1974-75 they noted down, especially for Beginning Chinese, those points where they felt language usage

in the PRC differed from that presented in my material.

This past summer I returned to France and spent a considerable amount of time working with my friends on the notes that they had accumulated during the previous year. In some cases we went over my material line by line. Under their guidance I drafted new exercises to incorporate the new usages in the PRC.

Although I believe that students should be exposed to both pre-1949 and post-1949 language usage, it seems to me that students and teachers should have the option of stressing one or the other, that is, of learning one actively and the other passively. To this end I have for the most part handled the new material as Supplementary Lessons with notes drawing attention to PRC variants in language usage.

Such variants can be considered as belonging to four levels: phonological, lexical, syntactical, and situational.

The phonological changes have to do chiefly with the lesser emphasis in the PRC on the r-ending typical of the Peking dialect, though Pǔtōnghuà usage is by no means consistent in this matter. In some cases I showed the variation by extending my practice of enclosing the r ending in parentheses, as in shíhòu(r) and diànyǐng(r). [redacted] I have reduced my use of the r ending in line with the direction that Pǔtōnghuà is taking and [redacted] I have also eliminated some of the peculiarly Pekingese alternative pronunciations, such as yánshar 'color' and gàosong 'inform'.

Lexical changes are the most numerous. For instance, although 'hour' is expressed by both zhōngtóu and xiǎoshí in Pǔtōnghuà, the latter is apparently becoming more widespread. Both forms occur in Modern Chinese Reader, published in 1958, but only xiǎoshí is given in Elementary Chinese, published in 1972. The dynamics of

change can perhaps be further observed by noting the different ways in which xiǎoshí is handled in these two texts. In Modern Chinese Reader it was used with or without a measure word. In Elementary Chinese it is used always with the generalized measure ge.

Some lexical changes, such as the one just noted, are well under way in Pǔtōnghuà. Some are just beginning, such as the occasional spoken use, especially by Southerners, of yuán for kuài and jiǎo for máo in expressions having to do with money. Others can be considered to be completed, as in the case of nálǐ and other expressions replacing guòjiǎng for 'You flatter me'.

I have drawn attention to some twenty lexical changes of this sort in Beginning Chinese. Of this number, less than half, perhaps, represent complete breaks with past usage. The rest comprise alternative expressions, such as the spoken use of yuán and jiǎo, that I might well have omitted except for my insistence on getting students used to the idea that they must expect to encounter variant forms of expression, perhaps even for additional items in the text that other native speakers from the PRC or elsewhere might bring up, and that they must get into the habit of trying to discover the significance of these variant forms. In the case of some of these lexical changes, that is some for which the lexical variants were already available in the text, the changes have been handled by making revisions in the original text. For most of the twenty-odd changes I have provided notes that attempt to assess the sociolinguistic significance of the change and the extent to which the change has been accepted; in addition I have provided supplementary exercises to drill the new usages.

It so happens that there are no syntactical usages in Beginning Chinese that have been replaced by new forms in the PRC. Changes in this area have of course taken place, as has been noted, among others, by Li Chi in her New Features in Chinese Grammatical Usage. More advanced materials must take these changes into account.

An important area of change is the situational. This is the most complex of all since it involves the enormous social shifts that have taken place since 1949 and are still proceeding at a rapid pace. Some of the grosser features of these changes are fairly obvious and well known: Chinese in the PRC no longer engage in buying and selling land, for example, or worry about having money to attend school, or discuss other matters that are no longer features of their society. To be sure, they may still discuss these matters as they might relate to the past, or to a foreign country, but in these cases the topics would doubtless be handled differently, often with comments on the contrast between the bad old days and the situation in China today.

It is in the more delicate aspects of social interaction that we have the most problems. One difficulty is our limited ability to observe such interactions and to note their sociolinguistic features--that is, the specific language used and the specific social relations involved. Another difficulty is presenting as concisely and efficiently as possible what we do know about these matters. The description and analysis of a specific communicative act even in our own culture is likely to be a long drawn out and enormously complicated affair. How much more is this the case when we are dealing with such a different culture as that of the People's Republic.

Take the case of forms of address. We all know that some of the older forms of address, such as xiānsheng, tàitai, and xiáojie, have either been abandoned or are used in a much more restricted manner than in the past, and that these linguistic

changes reflect changes in social attitudes. Nevertheless, while xiǎojie, for example, is no longer used by Chinese in the PRC among themselves, they still use it in addressing foreign women and some at least among them accept its use by foreigners in addressing Chinese. Visitors to China have been much taken by the use of àirén in referring to one's own or another's spouse or fiancé(e). Yet we must not over-romanticize the situation. The term is by no means universally used in China. Professor Arthur Galstan, who in 1972 spent two weeks on a commune not far from Peking, specifically states that the term was rarely used there. Moreover, we foreigners must exercise the greatest caution in the use of this term, as it indicates a degree of familiarity that, sadly, rarely characterizes relations between Chinese and foreigners these days. Caution is also needed in the use of tóngzhì. Even among Chinese the term is not in universal use. As recently as June 2, 1975 the People's Daily carried an article exhorting Chinese to abandon their preference for titles of rank or position in favor of the more egalitarian 'Comrade'. My French colleagues also report that in their contacts with Chinese from the PRC the latter express overwhelmingly a preference for the use of their official titles. Again, official Chinese publications, such as their textbooks, urge the use of the polite pronoun nín. Yet one PRC Pǔtōnghuà informant in France said he never uses nín.

We have here a very serious problem which needs careful consideration. American linguists, in their attempts to get school teachers of English to teach the language as it is spoken, that is to teach such forms as "It's me" instead of "It is I", invented a Miss Fidditch as the architypical schoolmarm who attempts to impose an artificial standard. We must also guard against uncritical acceptance of the pronouncements of Chinese Fidditches, especially since Pǔtōnghuà, a hybrid Common Language which is officially defined as embodying the pronunciation of the general Peking dialect, the

grammar of Northern Chinese dialects, and the vocabulary of modern colloquial Chinese literature, will apparently remain for a long time a norm far less standardized than that of France, Japan, or even the United States. More than ever we need to be on our guard against such dogmatic statements as 'We always say such-and such" or "We never say so-and-so."

My remarks concerning forms of address have merely scratched the surface of this enormously complex subject. But complexity exists also in relation to many other changes in language usage in the PRC. The change from niàn shū to xuéxí involves the whole question of the relationship between theory and practice and the emphasis on joining the two in education as in all spheres of Chinese life. The gradual penetration of xiǎode for zhīdao raises the thorny question of acceptance of dialect forms into Pǔtōnghuà, a problem which the Chinese appear to be handling by a great deal of tolerance toward dialectical variation (especially in pronunciation, as noted by the group of American linguists who, following their visit to China in the Fall of 1974, predicted that the retroflex-dental distinction would eventually disappear in Chinese). The occasional use of yuán and jiǎo in place of kuài and máo raises the equally complex issue of penetration of written forms into the spoken language, a development greatly fostered by Pǔtōnghuà radio broadcasts using a style closer to writing than to ordinary speech. The lexical change from huǒji to fúwùyuán for 'waiter' or 'attendant' also involves an important sociological change, the elimination of tipping, so that the term xiǎofèi, like that for bound feet, needs to be placed in its proper social setting. What Beverly Hong Fincher calls "political socialization" carries with it the extensive use of politicized language that may comprise either new terms or old terms in new meanings,

such as zuǒchuqu 'to walk out' in reference to the practice of students going to participate in factory or farm work.

In this connection a cautionary note is in order. We must be careful not to indulge in extensive generalization or extrapolation on the basis of what for most of us is only a frog-in-the-well view of the enormously broad range of linguistic usage in the People's Republic. Knowing that guòjiǎng is no longer used should not lead to such a broad generalization regarding more straightforward linguistic usage as to ignore the continuing existence of polite forms like náli and, even more surprising, guìxìng 'what is your honorable surname?', the latter specifically attested by my informants in France though noted by Caroline Hsiao Wu among items that are now obsolete.

We could write essays on many of these subjects, but the language classroom, or the language textbook for that matter, is no place for lengthy discussion of these things. There are various ways to handle these matters. In my own case, what I have done is to draw attention to the changes I have just noted, and others as well, as concisely and informatively as possible, and to provide material to drill these changes to the extent necessary. For instance, in addition to noting that fúwùyuán has replaced huǒjī in the PRC, I also draw attention to the concept of serving the people embodied in the new term, and I further press the point home by providing a short conversational drill in which a foreign speaker asks about tipping and is answered with "We don't give tips in China."

This approach applies also to the written form of Chinese. My colleagues at the Université de Provence, I discovered, were using the character version of my Beginning Chinese, and as an aid to their teaching they had compiled a list of 162 characters representing the simplified versions of as many regular characters among the total of 494 used in that text. In response to their urging that I supply drill for these simplified characters, I have taken pains, in compiling the Supplementary Lessons for

Beginning Chinese, to provide additional drill that would lay the basis for adequate review of the simplified forms in Character Text for Beginning Chinese. Here, as also in my revision of the Supplementary Lessons in Beginning Chinese Reader, the material not only provides practice in the simplified characters but also tries to be consistent with the situational variants to be found in the People's Republic. Indeed the procedure adopted in Beginning Chinese of leaving the original lessons basically intact and adding new material relevant to the PRC as Supplementary Lessons was adopted in part so that in Character Text for Beginning Chinese the original content would be written appropriately, in regular characters and the new material would be written, also appropriately, in simplified characters.

My overall approach has been one that stresses the contrastive aspect of language usage. If contrastive linguistics has any pedagogical value, and general opinion certainly holds that it does insofar as native versus target languages are concerned, as indicated by its wide use in teaching pronunciation by contrastive analysis of English and Chinese articulation, it has also, I believe, special value in making our students more sensitive to the complex sociolinguistic aspects of communication within a target language. It can help our students to acquire not merely linguistic competence but also sociolinguistic competence in Chinese, that is to progress from mechanical mastery of linguistic forms to a sensitive awareness of Chinese culture as embodied in its language.

This approach can of course be applied to any set of teaching materials. It is not my desire to argue the relative merits of one or another text. That has been done extensively in various meetings of this kind. The actual situation is that conscientious and competent teachers have different preferences. Obviously this is because each

set of materials has some merit. Yet I think it safe to say that no set is completely satisfactory, certainly not for everyone, and not even for those who have settled upon one or another text. The fact is that no set of materials can ever be compiled so as to be completely satisfactory, as is attested by the never-ending addition of supplementary aids that have had to be developed for every one of them. All these sets of materials could further benefit by the addition of sociolinguistic aids along the lines I am suggesting.

In the case of Mandarin Primer, for example, there is general recognition that in some respects, such as fidelity to natural speech, it has no equal. But I am sure that there would also be general recognition that some of the language and some of the situations are out of date. The preparation of supplementary materials that could deal with changes that have taken place in these areas would enable supporters of this text to take advantage of its real assets while making up for its shortcomings.

The same general approach can be applied to texts from the People's Republic. Although I do not fully subscribe to Paul Kratochvil's extremely negative evaluation of these texts, they do need, I believe, to be provided with considerable supplementary materials, particularly because of their tendency, as noted by my French colleagues, to reflect not actual usage but what the government aspires to have as ordinary usage, and because they are invariably written only in simplified characters. I think it would be a great disservice to our students to limit their knowledge of characters to this form. As a matter of fact, if we are not to increase the burden of our students, the regular forms should be introduced and practiced first, since I believe it is easier to learn simplified after regular than vice versa. Moreover, here too the new linguistic usages can be more informatively taught if contrasted with other usages.

These other usages are not, after all, completely obsolete or completely useless. Until teachers from the PRC replace our present teachers of Chinese, as has partially happened in France, students will be interacting outside as well as inside the classroom chiefly with speakers who will probably not use terms like 'comrade' and 'lover' as part of their ordinary linguistic repertoire. Moreover, earlier writings (i.e. before 1956 as regards simplified characters, before 1949 as regards most writing in the areas of literature, history, etc.) made use of the earlier characters and expressions and dealt with situations that our students can ignore only at the cost of a narrowness that I should think would be totally unacceptable. Regardless of our political sympathies, we must teach both Zhōnghuá Mínguó and Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó. The either-or approach has no more place in the sociolinguistic sphere than in the more traditional areas of language-teaching methodology.

Let me add one final note regarding the actual teaching of Chinese as against the compilation of materials for teaching the language. Paul Kratochvil's negative comments notwithstanding, I think that what we might call our "Pre-1949 language teachers" still have great potential utility and can and should continue to play an important role even after exchange teachers from the PRC come to the United States. For they have the important potential of supplementing their extensive knowledge of their own language, the major part of which has after all remained unchanged, with information, which of course they must make an effort to acquire, about new language usages in the PRC. They will thus be uniquely qualified to enrich the teaching of Chinese by presenting these new usages with a contrastive approach that would at once be more effective pedagogically and, hopefully, more likely to moderate the polarization implied in the concept of Chinese as a divided language.

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